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### CREATION OF THEMATIC CLUSTERS AND ROUTES IN AREAS WITH HISTORICAL SITES

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#### Abstract

This article analyzes the theoretical and practical foundations for the formation of thematic clusters and tourist routes in areas where historical sites are located. The relevance of the study lies in the fact that many historical monuments are considered as separate objects, while their territorial, functional, and tourism-related interconnections remain insufficiently explored. The article examines the principles of integrating historical sites into a unified spatial system, grouping them thematically, linking them through transport and pedestrian routes, providing information and navigation infrastructure, and integrating them into the local economy.

Furthermore, the study considers issues related to increasing the tourism and recreational potential of historical areas through a cluster-based approach, adapting heritage sites to the contemporary socio-cultural environment, promoting sustainable tourism, and enhancing the investment attractiveness of territories. As a result, the necessity of interpreting historical areas not merely as a collection of monuments, but as multifunctional cultural landscape systems, is substantiated. This approach makes it possible not only to preserve historical sites but also to develop them as new tourist products, educational spaces, and recreational environments. The formation of thematic clusters and routes contributes to strengthening territorial identity, extending tourists' length of stay, and activating service sectors.



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**Keywords:** Historical site, cultural heritage, thematic cluster, tourist route, recreation, architectural-landscape environment, sustainable tourism, territorial development, navigation, visitor center..

### Introduction

Today, the issue of preserving the historical and cultural heritage is not limited to conservation or restoration. The issue of active inclusion of historical areas in social, economic and tourist processes in modern approaches becomes increasingly important. Especially in regions where there are many historical objects, there is a need to see them not as individuals, but as a cohesive thematic system. One effective way to develop historic areas is to create thematic clusters and routes. In this approach, objects are united on a single idea, a historical period, a cultural layer, a landscape feature or a tourist scenario. Thus, the area is not only a monument to see, but also a meaningful travel experience. Important stages of the cluster approach are the inventory, cartography, analysis of the current state, assessment of the existing infrastructure and implementation of a SWOT analysis of tourism potential for historical objects.

The purpose of this article is to reveal the basic principles of creating thematic clusters and routes in the regions where there are historical objects, to scientifically substantiate their role in the development of regional planning, tourism, recreation and management of cultural heritage.

The article uses the methods of systematic analysis, comparative approach, spatial planning analysis, functional zoning, cartographic characterization and SWOT analysis. In the study of historical objects, the main criteria were taken as their physical condition, connection to transport, landscape context, historical value, tourist interest and possibility of modern use. The level of preservation of the objects, the harmony with the environment, the level of information supply and comfort for visitors are of particular importance in the inclusion of historical areas in the tourist system.

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### **The concept of thematic cluster and its significance in historical regions**

Thematic cluster is a territorial association of objects, services, infrastructure elements and activities that are interconnected on the basis of a particular idea or content direction. For historical regions, such clusters can be formed in the following directions: clusters of ancient civilizations; The Great Silk Road Cluster; Archaeological Heritage Cluster; ethnographic and handicraft cluster; Historical-landscape and ecotourism cluster.

Thematic integration allows the tourist to see a logical connection between scattered objects. This will enhance the perception of the historic area, streamline the information delivery process and make the tourist product cohesive. The approach helps to interpret historical objects as an "active cultural resource" rather than as "monuments." The uploaded text also proposes thematic clusters and routes based on scenarios such as "Ancient Civilizations of Uzbekistan", "The Great Silk Road: Crossroads of Cultures", "Living History".

### **Principles of formation of thematic routes on the basis of historical objects**

Thematic routes are a practical expression of a historical cluster. The following principles are important when formulating a route: First, the principle of substantive integrity. Objects within the route must have a common historical, cultural or landscape theme. For example, one route may cover ancient defensive structures, another religious and architectural monuments, another objects related to ancient agriculture and irrigation culture. The second is the principle of territorial dependence. The facilities should be located at a convenient distance from each other, connected by transport, and correspond to the scenarios of a one- or two-day trip. Thirdly, the principle of information and navigation. For routes to work effectively, directional signs, maps, information stands, QR code descriptions, digital gid systems and indicators need to be developed. In this case, it is desirable to use universal symbols of archaeology, history and architecture, rather than religious or narrow symbolic symbols. Fourth, the principle of

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experientialism. The modern tourist wants to feel, learn and participate, not just watch. That is why it is important to include demonstrations of ancient handicrafts, lectures under the open sky, local food, landscape observation points and photo platforms as part of the route.

### **Building Blocks of Topic Clusters**

Creating clusters in historic areas is not limited to just listing objects. It as a multilayer system will consist of the following elements:

- a) Major heritage sites. These are the core of the cluster and are monuments of high historical and architectural value.
- b) Supporting infrastructure. Access roads, pedestrian corridors, recreation areas, parking lots, sanitation points, information centers and modular visitor centers form the service basis of the cluster. The uploaded document proposes modular visitor centers designed specifically for information, recreation and souvenir trade.
- c) Landscape and recreational space. With the preservation and use of the natural environment around the historical object, it is necessary to organize playgrounds, pedestrian routes, ecological cuttings, landscaped recreation areas.
- d) Services cluster. Local guides, artisans, guest houses, transport services, cafés and souvenir trade form economic activity around the object.

### **Advantages of Cluster Approach in Historic Areas**

Creating thematic clusters and routes gives several positive results. First of all, this approach increases the recognition of historical objects. A separate monument often cannot hold a tourist for long, but the system of objects within the cluster forms a complete travel product. Secondly, the period of stay of tourists in the territory will be extended. This will increase the demand for hotel, transport, catering and retail services. Third, the cluster model will involve locals in the tourism process. As a result, new jobs will be created: guides, service

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workers, souvenir makers, transport operators and zone supervisors. This economic principle is also separately noted in the loaded material. Fourth, the cluster approach also serves to preserve heritage sites. Because where there is an orderly system of use, zoning and management, vandalism, disordered access and degradation of the environment are reduced.

### **Question of zoning and stability**

The most important issue in attracting historic areas to tourist activities is the balance between preservation and use. Therefore, strict zoning is required on the territory of the cluster: the protection zone where the monument is located; a buffer zone with limited activity; Service and infrastructure development zone. This principle protects the objects of historical property from excessive exploitation and allows controlling the flow of tourists. All proposed activities should be built exactly on the principle of "tactfulness and preservation". In terms of sustainable tourism, clusters should prioritize not new construction, but minimal intervention, preservation of the natural landscape, rational use of existing routes, and control of environmental loads.

### **Prospects of creating thematic clusters in Uzbekistan**

There are many regions on the territory of Uzbekistan with a dense concentration of historical objects. There are monuments of different times and civilizations in Samarkand, Bukhara, Khorezm, Surkhandarya, Kashkadarya, Tashkent region and the Fergana Valley. Therefore, in the conditions of the republic, it is possible to form clusters of the following types:

- \* "Ancient cities and civilizations" cluster;
- \* cluster "Crossroads of cultures along the Silk Road";
- \* "Fortifications and Defensive Structures" route;
- \* ecoroute "Archaeological landscapes";
- \* "Crafts and Living History" Cluster.

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Such clusters connect the historical layers with each other, allowing the tourist to understand the multifaceted history of the area holistically. It is especially effective to show ancient crafts, architectural techniques, elements of local traditional way of life, rather than ritualized or staged religious images based on the principle of "living history".

### Conclusion

One of the most promising directions for the preservation and rational use of historical and cultural heritage is the creation of thematic clusters and routes in the territories where there are historical objects. The cluster approach allows viewing historical objects not as separate points, but as interconnected territorial, functional and substantive systems. This increases the tourist attractiveness of the monuments, enhances the economic vitality of the area and engages local residents in the process of heritage management. Creating thematic routes, priority should be given to the principles of meaningful integrity, territorial dependence, convenient infrastructure, information and navigation system, harmony with the landscape and sustainability. Strict zoning, minimal interference, and a conservation approach are especially important for historic sites.

Thus, thematic clusters and routes transform historical areas not only as a witness to the past, but also as an active resource of modern tourism, education, recreation and regional development. This can be recognized as one of the most effective forms of preservation of historical heritage.

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